



BASIS Ribbon Cutting Ceremony PEORIA

Thursday, August 4, 2011
Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Good afternoon, everyone! And, thank you, Jeffrey, for that kind introduction.

It's wonderful to see so many familiar faces here this afternoon – public servants – BASIS Board members – parents – teachers – you all have given of yourselves to help BASIS come to this proud and important moment.

This is a great day for Arizona's children.

We began the day in Chandler, to start the celebration of the opening of three new BASIS schools.

From Peoria, we are on to Flagstaff for yet another ribbon cutting. And, I must tell you, this is probably the finest TRIPLE PLAY I've ever seen!

As many of you know – the story of BASIS charter schools is really the story of Michael and Olga Block – and the vision they had in the late 1990s.

They wanted to create a school that would provide American students with a rigorous curriculum – one that would rival the education their peers were receiving in top performing educational systems around the world.

We know their dream has become a reality, because today, we are here to celebrate the fact that BASIS Schools are EXPANDING.

A total of six campuses in Arizona will serve about 3500 students -- with plans for further expansion next year.

We're all grateful to Michael and Olga for the time, effort and passion they've directed toward BASIS and Arizona's students.

There are other individuals who have ALSO played a critical role in guiding and expanding BASIS.

Craig Barrett, who is here with us today, has been a long-time advocate for improving U.S. education -- and, as a result, he's been a long-time friend to BASIS.

In addition to serving as the President and Chairman of the Board for BASIS Schools, Dr. Barrett, along with his wife Barbara, made generous financial contributions to establish the new campuses we're celebrating today.

And, let us also thank The Rodel Foundation and Don Budinger for their generous gifts.

There's yet another important story to tell that's been critical to the success of BASIS.

It's the story of Arizona's Charter School Law, its strength and its results.

I remember that vote in 1994 vividly.

It was our NINTH -- that's right -- our NINTH special session -- and we were finally going to pass a substantial piece of school choice and reform legislation.

I was excited that day because we were not only putting into place our open enrollment laws -- but our charter school laws, as well.

And, if you don't remember, back then some people were saying that this new law was way too radical.

Three different charter authorizers?

Fifteen year contracts?

No teacher certification requirements?

And the list went on.

Now, seventeen years later, that law has served as a solid foundation for schools like BASIS to start, grow, and replicate.

This is why I remain committed to fighting for school choice and freedom.

And BASIS success highlights some other principles I'm fighting for.

At the center of my education reform plan are high expectations, teacher quality and transparent accountability.

BASIS is already employing these principles and demonstrating that they CAN and DO work.

There's nothing more important we can do in public education today than to raise our expectations for all students. We need to let them know how much we believe in them. Children will rise to the occasion – as BASIS has demonstrated.

And at BASIS the high expectations are not just for the students but also for their teachers.

My education reform plan discussed the need to identify, train, and reward great teachers and great leaders.

Once again, BASIS, has not only demonstrated success -- but raised the bar.

BASIS teachers hold academic degrees in the discipline they teach, are passionate about their subject, and convey their passion in a way which gives students an overall sense that learning is exciting, rewarding, and worthwhile.

In fact, Jeffery Houser, is the parent of one BASIS graduate – AND one BASIS student.

And, Head of Operations Barb Delisa is also a BASIS parent. So, they know firsthand how wonderful BASIS teachers are.

Another critical piece of their success is their embrace of accountability.

While many are still debating testing and the use of data, BASIS has decided to use these to teach their students to be accountable for their own education.

Knowing they will ultimately be held responsible, students take their education seriously.

In my reform plan, we also set forth some goals, one of which was that 93 percent of all students would be able to pass the AIMS test by 2020.

Some have told me it can't be done.

Well, I'm here to tell you that it's NOT optional -- because the future of Arizona rests on the success of our students.

Let me close by mentioning that my concern for education is what compelled me to run for office many years ago.

And, I commit to you that every day between now and when I leave office, I will continue to fight until every student has not just a choice but EXCELLENT choices – opportunities – and a bright future.

Thank you, Michael and Olga.

Thank you, Dr. Barrett and the Rodel Foundation.

Thank you, BASIS, for proving what CAN be done -- when we believe in every child and when we give them great teachers and the support they need.

Thank you, and may God bless all of Arizona's students –

The parents who guide them;

-- The teachers who enlighten them;

-- And the schools that prepare them for tomorrow.